METHODS FOR TEACHING TRANSLATION

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Abstract

The present, brief and intensive work is devoted to study and review a number of translational concepts. These are considered to be representing the main pillars of translation without which the whole process of translation might be collapsed. The notion of translation and its basic features are dealt with and focused upon here. Having discussed this notion, the translation itself will be clearly seen as a process completely grounded on two different linguistic systems referring to two cultures. Translation approaches are very necessary for adopting the right methods for teaching translation, an issue which is fully discussed in this paper. Other essential related issues are touched upon in pass such as the required qualifications that the translation teacher should have in order to teach how to overcome various translation problems. This issue in particular may lead the reader to the question; is translation teachable? The objective answer of this question might pave the way to explore the features of the unclear circle of this domain and to provide some sort of agreement between the two extremes; those who think it is possible to teach translation and those who think it is not.

Abbreviations:

MT Machine Translation
SL Source Language
ST Source Text
TL Target Language
TT Target Text

Keywords: translation, translation methods, translation difficulties, translation teaching methods.

1- Introduction

Every translation activity has one or more specific purposes and whichever they may be; the main aim of translation is to serve as a cross-cultural bilingual communication vehicle among people.

Chute (1978) cited in Miremadi, (1991:21) points out, that "without translation, our world would narrow mercilessly"; So, it is quite clear that translation plays an important role in human communication. It is the gateway for understanding others and their civilizations. One of the most effective methods of communication is language. Language has been employed to satisfy the real need of communication. In our world, communication between different nations with different languages is feasible through translation. So, translation is vital and the mission of translation teacher is also important; but such a mission is not that easy, i.e., it is an intricate process. The reason behind this difficulty is that the teacher, in this domain, plays constantly the roles of a reader, a decision – maker, a writer and an assessor. In addition, the teacher of translation should be efficient in SL and TL as well. Thus, he / she should have certain qualifications so that to do his / her job satisfactorily. In the following sections, we will review all the above mentioned issues concerning the subject of translation and how to teach it.

2-What is Translation?

In my opinion, it is necessary to start with clarifying the notion of translation in order to make the picture clearer. Webster's New World dictionary defines **"translation"** as follows:

1. to move from one place or condition to another; to transfer (a bishop) from one to another; also, to move (a saint's body or remains) from one place of interment to another;
2. to put into the words of a different language;
3. to change into another medium or form to translate ideas into action;
4. to put into different words; rephrase or paraphrase in explanation.

House (2009:3) says that translation is the replacement of an original text with another text. However, translation, as mentioned by (Robinson, 1997:49), is an intelligent activity involving complex processes of conscious and unconscious learning.

To sum up, **Translation** is the communication of the meaning of a source – language text by means of an equivalent target – language text. According to the above definition, we need translation to communicate with other civilizations; to get great knowledge from other cultures; and once we get knowledge from others, we can get benefits from them, we can improve ourselves, and at the same time we can transfer our culture and knowledge to others. It is not an easy job; it needs professional intelligent people to deal with since it is an intelligent activity.

Before going deeper into the methods of teaching translation, we have a basic question to be answered in this connection:

2.1. Is translation teachable?

The above question leads us to another question in order to clarify the first one which is:

2.2. Is translation a science, an art, or a craft?

In fact, according to most linguists translation is considered to be all of them; i.e. translation is a science, it is an art, and it is a craft. The judgment for this claim, according to these linguists, is that translation studies can be regarded as a science. However, if we take the product of translation into account, it seems rational to think of it as a craft or an art. In other words, theoretically, one can consider translation a science; practically, it seems rational to consider it an art, and, realistically it is a craft.

But whether translation is regarded to be a science, an art, or craft, it seems significant to note that a good translation should play the same role in the TL as the original does in the SL.

Now, it is obvious that translation is teachable since all the above explained characteristics can be taught by a teacher.

3-The Importance of Translation

As we have already said, translation is a means of communication. So, we have to deal with the process of translation in a very precise way. In other words, we, as translators and teachers as well, must be faithful to the original text. This is the simplest principle that should be taken into consideration in translation. But the translator may face problems through doing translation. The first problem is related to the reading and comprehension ability in the source language. Once the translator has coped with this obstacle, the most frequent translation difficulties are of a semantic and cultural nature: "Linguistic untranslatability" (cognates, i.e. true and false friends, calque, and other forms of interference; institutional and standardized terms, neologisms, aphorisms, etc.), and "cultural untranslatability," (idioms, sayings, proverbs,

jokes, puns, etc.), mentioned by (Tricás, 1995) cited in Gerding-Salas at http://www.translatiojournal.net.

One should adopt a very cautious attitude toward these words or expressions so as to avoid interference and/or language misuse (Kussmaul, 1995). According to Gerding-Salas (ibid) says: whatever the difficulty in the translation process, procedures must aim at the essence of the message and faithfulness to the meaning of the source language text being transferred to the target language text.

It is essential to claim now that in order to say that the translation teacher must start with himself / herself to overcome such difficulties in translation so as to be able to teach his / her students how to overcome these difficulties, otherwise he / she would be considered an incompetent teacher. The reason behind that is that the quality of translation will depend on the quality of the translator, i.e. on her/his knowledge, skills, training, cultural background, expertise, and even mood! So, if the teacher of translation lacks one or more of the above features he/ she could not succeed in his / her job.

According to Newmark (1988a) any good translator should have:

- Reading comprehension ability in a foreign language
- Knowledge of the subject
- Sensitivity to language (both mother tongue and foreign language)
- Competence to write the target language dexterously, clearly, economically and resourcefully

To conclude this section, it is important to say that to be a proficient teacher in translation; he / she must be proficient in translation as a process. So, I think, it is necessary, here, to have an idea about the most important translation methods that must

be adopted by any translator and that must be grasped by students.

4-Translation methods

In this part of the work, we are going to review the translation methods put forward by Newmark (1988b: 81). He writes that, "While translation methods relate to whole texts, translation procedures are used for sentences and the smaller units of language". He goes on to refer to the following methods of translation:

1- Word-for-word translation: in which the SL word order is preserved and the words translated singly by their most common meanings, out of context.
2- Literal translation: in which the SL grammatical constructions are converted to their nearest TL equivalents, but the lexical words are again translated singly, out of context.
3- Faithful translation: it attempts to produce the precise contextual meaning of the original within the constraints of the TL grammatical structures.
4- Semantic translation: which differs from 'faithful translation' only in as far as it must take more account of the aesthetic value of the SL text.
5- Adaptation: which is the freest form of translation, and is used mainly for plays (comedies) and poetry; the themes, characters, plots are usually preserved, the SL culture is converted to the TL culture and the text is rewritten.
6- Free translation: it produces the TL text without the style, form, or content of the original.
7- Idiomatic translation: it reproduces the 'message' of the original but tends to distort nuances of meaning by preferring colloquialisms and idioms where these do not exist in the original.

8- Communicative translation: it attempts to render the exact contextual meaning of the original in such a way that both content and language are readily acceptable and comprehensible to the readership (Newmark, 1988b: 45-47). The above methods, as I think, should be learnt by students of translation as a first step, and then they should apply them when dealing with the practical aspect of translation.

5-Teaching Translation

Teaching, in general, is a great mission. It is not an easy job; it needs a great effort to be exerted by a teacher in order to communicate with his / her students in a way that can transfer his / her knowledge to them. Teaching translation, on the other hand, is sophisticated work because the one who teaches translation must be professional in this field, namely, competent in teaching translation material as a science and treating this domain as a skill as well. In other words, he / she has to have a dual ability the first of which is that he / she must be proficient in teaching translation as a theoretical part and at the same time he / she must be professional in translation as a practical domain. This requires that translation teachers must be qualified in doing their job (i.e. teaching and translation). To do this job in a convincing fashion, translation teacher must adopt certain methods for doing such a duty. The most important thing is that the teacher of translation must be competent in both languages, i.e., SL and TL, otherwise the quality of his work can never be convincing.

6-Translation problems

Before reviewing the methods of teaching translation, it seems to be necessary to have a brief idea about translation problems that may encounter the translators, in general, and students of translation in particular.

In fact, translation problems can be divided into:

6.1. Linguistic problems

Linguistic problems include grammatical differences, lexical ambiguity and meaning ambiguity. This is also affirmed by El Zeini (1994) cited in Nakhallah at (http://www.qou.edu) . She identifies six main problems in translating from Arabic to English and vice versa; these are lexicon, morphology, syntax, textual differences, rhetorical differences, and pragmatic factors.

On the other hand, another level of difficulty in translation work is found by As-Sayyd (1995). She conducts a study to compare and assess some problems in translating the fair names of Allah Almighty in the Qur'an. She points out that some of the main problems of translation are over-translation, under-translation, and untranslatability.

6.2. Cultural problems

Culture is another major problem that facing translators. As mentioned by Nakhallah at (http://www.qou.edu) who says: a bad model of translated pieces of literature may give misconceptions about the original. That is why Fionty (2001) thought that poorly translated texts distort the original in its tone and cultural references, while Zidan (1994) wonders about the possible role of the target culture content as a motivating variable in enhancing or hindering the attainment of linguistic, communicative and, more importantly, cultural objectives of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) education. Hassan (1997) emphasizes this notion when he points out the importance of paying attention to the translation of irony in the source language context. He clarifies that this will not only transfer the features of the language translated but also its cultural characteristics.

6.3. Pragmatic problems

Pragmatic translation problems as mentioned by Nakhallah at (http://www.qou.edu) are those arising from the particular transfer situation with its specific contrast of source language vs.target language recipients, source language medium.

In order to identify potential pragmatic problems, we need to check the extra textual factors, for each text (the profile and intention of the text producer, the target reader, the medium of communication, places and time of production and reception of the text).

6.4. Text-specific problems

According to Mihaela at http://www.scribd.com, they are the problems that cannot be parts in any of the other three categories. They refer to specific situations of communication that are unique and dependent on a certain context.

All the above mentioned problems should be taken into consideration by the teacher of translation when teaching his / her students how to translate. They should be taught how to overcome these problems in order to present a good work.

7-Methods for Teaching Translation

First of all, we must assume that students have sound linguistic knowledge, both theoretical and practical, and a wide cultural bilingual background, achieved during their first years in college. In other words, we have to teach students the theoretical aspects of translation as being a first step, in detail, in order for them to be qualified for translating in an acceptable way.

In other words, in addition to teaching the theoretical principles in the first year, we have to teach students the preliminaries of translation starting from how to translate simple

sentences to the dealing with paragraphs and texts in a graduate fashion.

Gerding-Salas at http://www.translatiojournal.net has mentioned some methodological steps to be followed. I think that these steps can be, to a great extent, successful in teaching translation in terms of students' motivation, productivity and the quality of the translated work. They are as follows:

1. The teacher makes a selection of the material to be translated. Texts must be chosen accurately taking into account the degree of difficulty of the texts (semantic, cultural, stylistic, etc.), the topic or the specific knowledge area (science and technology; social, institutional, economic and/or political topics; and literary or philosophical works), the translation problems to be solved, and so on.
2. After browsing through the text (scan reading), the students assisted by their teacher, should identify the source, the norm, the type of text, the register, the style and the readership of the text selected.
3. The students should read the whole text at least twice: The first reading should be comprehensive and general in order for the student to become acquainted with the topic and to understand the original, always bearing in mind that meaning is context-determined.
4. The second reading must be logically deeper as students place emphasis on items where translation problems may appear. We can call this process as "reading with translation intention," i.e. doing pre-editing and assessing the quality of the writing (Reminder: Not all texts are well written). If the student detects mistakes (usually due to misprints) in the original text, when translating into the TL, she/he should be entitled to correct them in her/his version. When doing this "reading with translation intention," students should first

underline unknown terms and then they should mentally confront potential translation difficulties in the text with suitable translation procedures.

5. The teacher then divides the text into as many segments as there are students in the group. Depending on the degree of difficulty and the length of the text, these segments may be paragraphs, columns, pages or even whole chapters. Then, each student is assigned a fair portion of the text. The segment distribution order should rotate so that a different student begins a translation unit every time.
6. If the topic is already quite familiar to the students, they do a preliminary translation. As this is the first approach to the text, it will probably lack naturalness since students tend to transfer SL units of translation to TL units of translation (one-to-one translation). This first approach can often be made orally and suggested annotations may be written in the margins.
7. If the topic is completely unknown to the students, they should consult complementary literature. In other words, before beginning the transfer process, they should resort to various documentation sources, especially parallel texts (those which are similar in nature and style) in the language of the original. This allows them to achieve a deeper understanding of the topic under study.
8. Once the "one-to-one" version is accomplished, the students do a second version of their own translation—this time a written draft—handling the most suitable translation strategies and procedures and being faithful in the transfer of ideas.
9. With the original text in front of her/him and being careful to follow the same correlative order of the SL text, each

student reads out her/his own version of the translated text, making the necessary pauses between sentences.

10. The students and the teacher follow the reading of each text attentively. As a monitoring activity, everybody should feel free to stop the reading at the end of a given sentence and have the reading of the segment repeated when the situation warrants comments, suggestions, questions, contributions, etc. The students have to "defend" their work against criticism.
11. During this procedure, the students and the teacher need to set up all necessary conventions with regard to the homogeneity of the terms and the coherence and cohesion of the final version.
12. As Newmark (1988a) states that students should then be encouraged to take notes and discuss the (in) convenience of the contributions and comments arising from this analytical reading of each one of the different versions proposed.
13. As a metacognitive activity, the students, assisted by the teacher, analyze the translation strategies and procedures used, and discuss the reasons taken into account the choice of each analyzed criterion: "*The ability to discuss translations in an objective way is central to a translator's competence"*, (Kussmaul, 1995).
14. The students hand in the final version of their revised and post-edited segments, which have already been amended in the light of the whole text. The work must be typed, double-spaced and paged according to the original.
15. The teacher makes a final revision (second post-edit), gives formative evaluation and makes comments, emphasizes findings, "happy" solutions and creative acts, on the one hand, and analyzes failures and weaknesses in the process, on the other.

8-Professional Teaching requirements

Bayar (2007: 252) states that professionalism denotes (a) belonging to, or membership of a profession, (b) having or showing skill of a profession, (c) doing a certain kind of work as a full time occupation to make a living as opposed to amateur occupation. All of these apply to a professional translator with a greater expertise and specialization.

To implement the process of teaching translation in a perfect way, students and a teacher as well have to possess some requirements as mentioned by Gerding-Salas at http://www.translatiojournal.net, they are as follows:

8.1. Profile of the Teacher*:*

According to El Shafey (1985:95) "A translator first analyzes the message, breaking it down into its simplest and structurally clearest elements, transfers it at this level into the target language in the form which is most appropriate for the intended audience. A translator instinctively concludes that it is best to transfer the "kernel level" in one language to the corresponding "kernel level" in the "receptor language."

To implement such features and to be able to teach them to students, the teacher of translation should have the following:

1- Sound knowledge of the SL and the TL, translation theory, transfer procedures, cognition and methodology.
2- Comprehension of what translation is and how it occurs (Bell, 1994)
3- Permanent interest in reading various kinds of texts.
4- Ability to communicate ideas clearly, empathically and openly.
5- Ability to work out synthesis and interrelationship of ideas.
6- Capacity to create, foster and maintain a warm work environment, "an atmosphere of sympathetic encouragement" (Kussmaul, 1995)

7- Capacity to foster search and research.
8- Accuracy and truthfulness; critical, self-critical and analytical capacity.
9- Clear assessment criteria.

8.2. Profile of the Students

Students of translation have to have the following requirements:

1- Sound linguistic training in the two languages.
2- Knowledge covering a wide cultural spectrum.
3- High reading comprehension competence and permanent interest in reading.
4- Adequate use of translation procedures and strategies.
5- Adequate management of documentation sources.
6- Improvement capacity and constant interest in learning.
7- Initiative, creativity, honesty and perseverance.
8- Accuracy, truthfulness, patience and dedication.
9- Capacity for analysis and self-criticism.
10- Ability to maintain constructive interpersonal relationships.
11- Capacity to develop team work.
12- Efficient data processing training at user's level.
13- Acquaintance with translation software for MT and MT edition.

9- Conclusion

Translation is a process in which a translator transfers a text from one language into another. In other words, the process of translation between two different languages involves the translator changing an original text (ST) into another text (TT). It is a communication of the meaning of a source – language text by means of an equivalent target – language text.

So, since translation has a great importance as a means of communication, it needs a professional person to deal with as a process. In other words, because translation deals with two

different languages, the translator must be bilingual (i.e., professional in SL and TL). This applies on the teacher of translation as well.

To do his / her job convincingly, the teacher of translation should follow certain methods to carry out such a duty. These methods should be capable for implementation.

Both teachers and students, in the domain of translation, should have certain profiles as have already mentioned.

One important point to be mentioned here is that translation teacher should take into consideration the time determined for his / her lecture. In other words, there should be adequate time for translation trainees since training is the most important factor needed by students to improve their ability in translation.

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الخلاصة

كُرِسَ هذا العمل المركّز من اجل دراسة و استعراض عدد من المفاهيم المتعلقة بعملية الترجمة التي تمثل الاعمدة الرئيسة لهذا الموضوع و التي لا يمكن ان يُستغنى' عنها ابداً. مفهوم الترجمة و اسسها المهمة قد تم التأكيد عليها كذلك حيث كشف هذا الموضوع حقيقة ان الترجمة تستند على منظومتين لغويتين مختلفتين تمثلان مفهومين ثقافيين متباينين. بالاضافة الى ذلك، ناقش هذا العمل مناهج دراسة الترجمة و طرائق تدريسها. و من الموضوعات المهمة الاخرى التي تطرق لها هذا البحث و بشكل سريع نسبياً هي المؤهلات التي يجب ان تتوافر في من يتصدى' لموضوع تدريس الترجمة و كيفية التغلب على المشاكل المتنوعة التي تنبثق عنها حيث يمكن لهذا الموضوع ان يقود القارئ لتساؤل مهم هو: هل يمكن تدريس موضوع الترجمة؟ كذلك فأن الاجابة الموضوعية على هذا السؤال يمكن ان تؤدي الى استكشاف المميزات الفارقة للدائرة غير الواضحة لعملية الترجمة. كذلك فأن هذه الاجابة يمكن ان تؤدي الى نوع من الاتفاق بين من يعتقد بأمكانية تدريس الترجمة و من لا يعتقد ذلك.

الكلمات الرئيسية: الترجمة , اساليب الترجمة , صعوبات الترجمة , اساليب تدريس الترجمة